

May 31, 2005

Ms. Peggy Halferty
Environmental Partners, Inc.
293 NE Gilman Blvd., Suite 201
Issaquah, WA 98027

Dear Ms. Halferty:

Thank you for your public comment letter received on December 17, 2004, regarding Washington State's Water Quality Assessment for 2002/2004. The department received over 45 comment letters during this last review process and is appreciative of the time you took to review and comment on this assessment. We realize that there is an extensive amount of information in the Water Quality Assessment. The scrutiny given by you and other public reviewers has resulted in many changes and corrections that improved the accurateness of the final submittal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Water Quality Assessment is being submitted to EPA as an "integrated report" to meet the Clean Water Act requirements of sections 305(b) and 303(d). EPA will only take approval action on Category 5 of the assessment, which represents the state's 303(d) list. The Water Quality Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/index.html>.

We asked staff in our Environmental Assessment Program (EAP), Marine Unit, to review the information you provided for the dissolved oxygen and pH listings in Port Gamble Bay. The results are enclosed in a memorandum by Brian Grantham, EAP. Comparison of available data to reference locations suggests that there is a probable anthropogenic influence on dissolved oxygen levels at the Port Gamble site, however they could not be fully conclusive. They also reviewed the pH records upon which the listing was based, as well as records from nearby stations outside the bay and concluded there was a strong likelihood there was some systematic misalignment of the pH sensor due to a calibration problem. Because this conclusion on pH indicates the data was not reliable, it was recommended that the data be withdrawn from consideration in the assessment.

We also have considered the additional information you provided on the July 2003 Cleanup Action Plan and related dredging that occurred. You make some compelling arguments that the cleanup actions of both the dredging as part of the Sediment Cleanup Action Plan and the MTCA Voluntary Cleanup Program have resulted in significant improvements to the bay that would provide improvements to dissolved oxygen, among other things. The indication of substantial

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recovery of benthic biological community is a very good sign that water quality improvements have occurred. We have moved the dissolved oxygen listing to a category 2 with a note regarding the cleanup actions.

Thank you again for taking the time to provide comments to Ecology. If you have questions regarding the above responses, or would like further clarification, please feel free to call me at 360-407-6414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Braley".

Susan Braley
Unit Supervisor
Watershed Management Section

Enclosure: Memo from Brian Grantham, EAP, 2/11/05